

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

FEBRUARY 14, 1860.—Ordered to be printed.

Mr. RICE made the following

REPORT.

[To accompany Bill S. 28.]

The Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads, to whom was referred Senate bill No. 28, entitled "An act making an appropriation for the erection in the city of Saint Paul, State of Minnesota, a suitable building for custom-house, post office, court rooms, and other offices of the United States, have had the same under consideration, and respectfully report:

That it appears that the rooms now occupied by the United States district court at St. Paul are inconvenient, badly ventilated, and illy lighted. That the court room is in the third story next to the roof, and very small in its dimensions, with no accommodations for the grand and petit jurors when both panels are in court, and without proper and convenient places for criminals and witnesses during trial; and moreover it is believed that it would be a matter of economy to the government to erect a suitable building for the use of the federal offices at that point, as the sum now paid for rent for the several government offices in the city of St. Paul would be equivalent to the interest upon a large amount.

From authentic source the committee learn that the rent of the surveyor general's office is \$800 per annum, and that of the rooms for the court and its officers the same; there is paid also for rent of rooms occupied by the superintendent of Indian affairs \$300 per annum—making in all \$1,900 per year.

The committee also learn that the amount appropriated for the present fiscal year, and to be disbursed by the superintendent of Indian affairs, having his office at St. Paul, is \$332,733 33.

It appears to be a matter therefore of great importance that at all points where large amounts are annually disbursed by the government proper places should be provided for the safekeeping of its funds.

The committee furthermore learn, upon inquiry at the Post Office Department, that the business of the post office at St. Paul amounts to about \$14,000 a year, and that it appears to be steadily increasing. The gross expenses of the office, as charged, amount to about \$5,400 a year, of which sum \$800 is for office rent.

It is deemed highly important by the department that the post offices should be kept in secure buildings, so as to insure the safety of

the mails and public property from destruction by fire and the depredations of burglars.

The committee would here call attention to the following letter from the Acting Commissioner of the General Land Office:

GENERAL LAND OFFICE,
January 19, 1860.

SIR: In reply to your verbal inquiry of the 17th I have to inform you that the archives of the surveyor general's office at St. Paul, Minnesota, embrace original plats, field notes, and other evidence of survey, and all the correspondence relating thereto, of the lands in Minnesota, and a small portion of Wisconsin and Michigan Territories, reaching back to an early period, which were turned over from the old Cincinnati and Detroit offices. The destruction by fire, or other accident, of those important evidences of title, which lay at the foundation of the sales and other disposals of the public lands in the States named, would be almost irremediable, to say nothing of the great expense of renewing them, and would lead to great confusion, litigation, and pecuniary losses.

Their safety, therefore, is of the utmost importance, both to the government and the people of the States, and they should by no means be intrusted in frail buildings, which may be destroyed by fire in a night, with their contents, when by a trifling expenditure they may be placed in comparative security, and at the same time afford proper accommodation for the public officers, and facilitate the transaction of the public business.

I have the honor to be, your obedient servant,

JOS. S. WILSON,
Acting Commissioner.

Hon. H. M. RICE.

It will be perceived from the foregoing letter that there is evidently a strong desire on the part of the government relative to the occupancy of suitable buildings for the transaction of business, and for the safe-keeping of archives, and all matters of a governmental nature which it may be deemed of importance to preserve.

From a tabular statement furnished by the General Land Office, showing the cost to the United States of transporting money from the various land offices in Minnesota to the United States depository at Dubuque, Iowa, for the year ending December, 1857, it appears that \$5,858 14 was allowed by the government for that purpose.

Should a proper depository be established at St. Paul, of course the expense of transporting money to that point from the different land offices in that region of country would be much less than it is now, as in that event the land officers in Minnesota would be no longer compelled to take the long and expensive journeys to Dubuque they are now required to do to make their deposits.

A letter was addressed to Mr. Guthrie, while Secretary of the Treasury, by Hon. Henry Dodge, chairman of the Committee on Commerce, relative to an appropriation for the construction, at St. Paul, of a building for custom-house, &c., and asking for such suggestions on the

subject as he might think proper and conducive to the public interest. In Mr. Guthrie's reply the following remarks occur:

"I have to say that, in consequence of its great importance as a public depository, I should recommend the erection of a fire-proof building of stone for a public depository, custom-house, post office, court rooms, and other United States offices, 60 feet by 90 feet, and 56 feet high from the top of the under pinning to the eaves, having wrought iron girders, beams, shutters, stairways, roof, &c., for which there would be required an appropriation of \$100,000, and 10 per cent. additional for contingencies, exclusive of the cost of site."

The committee do not believe that the offices now occupied by the government at St. Paul are of a safe and durable character, which the importance of the business transacted at that point would seem to require. Nor do they perceive that any immediate remedy can be applied in the premises, as it is believed that the offices are already located in the safest and most suitable places in the city. And in view of these facts, the committee would recommend, for the future protection of the property of the government at the city of St. Paul, that the appropriation asked for be granted for the purpose expressed in the bill.

